DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 270 412 SP 027 626

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TITLE Teacher Education: The Professor's Point of View.
PUB DATE Apr 86
NOTE 30p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (70th, San Francisco, CA, April 16-20, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; Educational Research; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Educators

ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of six professors of education from three Canadian faculties of education. The two men and four women studied ranged in academic rank from lecturer to full professor and differed in university teaching experience from a few months to over 20 years. Areas of specialization and department affiliation included early childhood education, educational foundations, elementary education, social studies, reading and language arts, and secondary education. Information on the professors' teaching experiences was obtained through extensive open-ended interviews, university classroom observations, journal writing, and the examination of course syllabi and other written documents. Findings are presented in the form of stories and reflections, as told by the professors. Through careful analysis of the findings, a profile is presented of the teacher educator, with teacher education emerging as a generative mode of being, and as a primary way in which teacher educators search for meaning and confirmation in their own lives. (CB)

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TEACHER EDUCATION: THE PROFESSOR'S POINT OF VIEW

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American Educational Research Association
San Francisco
April 1986

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TEACHER EDUCATION: THE PROFESSOR'S POINT OF VIEW

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INTRODUCTION

Although very thorough in examining education students, cooperating teachers, program structures, and the like, the research literature of teacher education is remarkably silent on the topic of university-based teacher educators. What is it like to be a teacher educator? How do teacher educators live their professional lives? What are their aspirations and their intentions? How do teacher educators talk about teacher education? What does teacher education mean to them?

Very little research of any kind deals specifically with the experience of being a university-based teacher educator (Lanier: 1985). Less than two percent of all entries for teacher education in the Educational Research Information Centre (ERIC) data base relates even remotely to university-based teacher educators. Those few studies that do are usually survey-type questionnaires on a delimited topic (see, for example, Willson & Horn:1979), or surveys to gather statistics on the educational backround, career, gender, and social characteristics of teacher educators (see, for example, Ducharme & Agne: 1984; Mager & Myers: 1983; or Weidman & Weidman: 1975), or tributes to pioneers in teacher education (see, for example, Johanninameier & Merritt: 1978). In fact, as Lanier (1985) asserts, there is considerable difficulty in simply determining who teacher educators are. With

the exception of those who supervise field work in the schools, few university professors seem inclined to adopt the label as their principal professional identify (Borrowman:1965).

Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) point out that, as a group, teacher educators seem to be singularly uninterested in self-examination! We discuss our programs a great deal, but often in such a manner as to almost disassociate ourselves from them, objectifying them to such a degree that we do no longer view them as directly dependent on the beliefs, knowledge and actions of individual teacher educators. Moreover, the politics and traditions of teacher education seem to dictate that many of the personal aspects of our self-reflective discourse be confined to oral discussion or to internal administrative documents rather than to the more public realm of the research literature. Few of the studies or reports that attempt to outline research needs in teacher education identify the need to critically examine the teacher educator, to explore the lived experience of the very people who set the research agendas, or to study the teacher educators who spend so much time and effort examining the other participants in teacher education.

There are, of course, a few noteworthy exceptions. Popkewitz, Tabachnik, and Zeichner (1979), for example, recognize the importance of including teacher educators as an important topic for research. Hultgren (1982) and Roderick (1984) have each partially described and critically examined important aspects of their experiences as teacher educators, and Splaine

(1981) provides a descriptive account of his experience as a teacher educator in leading a course called "the study of teaching". Champion (1984), too, focusses on the teacher educator, discussing the rather limited impact of the research literature on the beliefs and teaching practices of teacher educators. Wisniewski (1984) has made an eloquent and urgent call for descriptive inquiry into the everyday lives of professors of education, forcefully arguing the necessity to question some of the taken for granted aspects of our institutional life. In a similar vein, Lanier (1985) has recently provided a provocative and useful overview of some of the issues that need to be raised in studying teacher educators. There is thus a slowly growing awareness of the contribution that can be made to teacher education by systematic inquiry into the experience of teacher educators.

This paper is a partial accounting of my inquiry into the experience of six professors of education from three Canadian faculties of education: two men and four women ranging in academic rank from lecturer to full professor and differing in university teaching experience from a few months to over twenty years. Their prior experience as classroom teachers varies from one to twenty years. Areas of specialization and department affiliation include early childhood education, educational foundations, elementary education, social studies, reading and language arts, and secondary education.

The Utrecht school of hermeneutic phenomenology as

articulated by Ton Beekman (1983); Loren Barritt (1984), and Max van Manen (1984) provided the theoretical framework and methodological inspiration for my inquiry. Through extensive open-ended interviewing (six - ten hours per participant), university classroom observations, journal writing, and the examination of course syllabuses and other written documents, I gathered a rich accumulation of life-material. The interviews were essentially dialogues, hermeneutic encounters that focussed on describing and understanding the participants' experience as teacher educators. The purpose of the interviews was to describe and reflect upon our lives as teacher educators, to engage in dialogue that might reveal new perspectives for teacher education.

The final interpretations emerged from a systematic analysis of the material, including the following activities:

reading transcripts of the interviews <u>while</u> listening to the tapes and writing down initial interpretations, themes and additional questions to ask the participants;

exploring the themes by cross-checking through the data for corroborating or negating experience;

asking of myself and others: Is that how it is? How is it that I see it that way?

systematically varying the themes through reflection (asking, for example, how an interpretation would be affected if a particular aspect were different, or were removed, or were not true);

relating the themes to the material as a whole and setting them in context (for example, by referring to complete, unmarked copies of the transcripts);

writing about the themes, giving supporting quotations or descriptions that show the interpretation as plausible;

critically reevaluating and rewriting; capturing the meaning and

flavour of significant moments;

sharing the interpretations with the participants for their evaluation;

searching the literature for concepts or information that might shed further light on the final interpretations.

I have chosen to present some of my findings in the form of stories and reflections. Stories retain the complexity and flavour of experience, evoking its wholeness as we unravel the threads of its meaning. All the hours of interviewing and the hundreds of pages of transcripts that are not included in the stories serve as the context or backdrop that helps me present and reflect upon the stories in a way that remains faithful to the lives from which the stories emerged. Neither the anthropologist, the phenomenologist, nor the naturalistic observer seeks to overwhelm readers with hundreds of pages of field notes. The researcher's task is to recognize and choose the most telling bits and to write about them in a manner that faithfully conveys the essence of what was seen, experienced, or discovered. Writing description means including "everything" without having to write everything; it means including all the layers of experience, as in Geertz's (1973) concept (after Ryle and Malinowski) of "thick description". The story is a form of reporting that is particularly well-suited to this task.

Some attention has been given in the literature to the suitability of literary forms for research reports. Harré (1978), for example, has asserted that the activities of the poet and the playwright offer the human science researcher a better model than those of the physical scientist, and Richardson (1981)

has suggested that the stance of the ethnographer should be the stance of the myth teller. Ross (1981) draws a most interesting parallel between the praxis of teacher, researcher, and storyteller. Each must eventually draw together one story. Each is involved in a critical mediation of reality. She quotes Walter Benjamin who wrote so eloquently in "The Storyteller":

> A story ...does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time.
> (Benjamin: 1968)

In describing phenomenological research, David Denton (1979) writes:

> Phenomenological research does not yield abstract theory: it does yield what Habermas calls gereralizable narrative.... Phenomenological research will ... provide a many-layered narrative against which the teacher and administrator can draw parallels with their worlds of practice. (p.14)

Through the power of metaphor, stories point to the meaning of our lives as we live them, illuminating and perhaps, indeed, changing them.

THE STORIES

The Little Boy who Loved to Draw

One day, I accidentally came across a poem while browsing through a book in the curriculum center. The poem is about a little boy in kindergarten who loves to draw pictures. When told by the teacher that the class was going to draw flowers, the little boy becomes very excited and starts to draw all sorts of flowers of many colours. "Waité" says the teacher, "until I show you how", and she proceeds to make a very stereotypic sort of flower on the chalkboard and colours it red. The other children

all start to copy the teacher's flower. The little boy looks at the teacher's flower, then looks at his own. He much prefers the ones he drew, but finally decides to turn his sheet over and make one like Teacher's. A similar thing happens when on another day, the teacher announces they are to make some clay dishes. The little boy happily begins to make all manner of dishes, some of them deep bowls with wonderfully imaginative shapes. "Waité" says the teacher, "we are going to make flat plates." Once again he prefers his own work to what the teacher proposes and once again he is gently "corrected" and so on. The little boy learns to wait and copy Teacher's demonstration, and he never again ventures to produce his own wonderful creations. Eventually, he stops feeling the urge to draw at all or to think for himself.

I found the poem powerful and moving. To me, it beautifully illustrates some of the main things I had been trying to point out to my education students: how we often unthinkingly stifle creativity and force children to depend on us, robbing them of their autonomy and their uniqueness and so on. Here, suddenly, was a poem that said in a few words what I had been spending hours trying to get across.

I read the poem to my students the very next day and the effect was electric. You could have heard a pin drop. All around the room, eyes were lighting up with recognition and heads were nodding in agreement. Even before the ensuing discussion, I know that they had finally understood. There was a special bond between us, as if we all felt the same way....We all recognized the conspiracy. We all condemned it, and yet, we all knew we were in danger of becoming part of it ourselves. They all wanted a copy of the poem and one of them said: "I want to hang it right over my workspace as a constant reminder to me when I prepare my lesson plans".

I felt so pleased at having found a way to communicate. I felt proud of having found that poem, of having offered it to them... almost as proud as if I had written it myself. But somehow I knew deep down that all this wasn't enough. All those nodding heads wouldn't amount to a hill of beans if their practice, their own teaching remained unexamined, untouched by the poem. What I find so frustrating about university teaching is that we rarely get to see what effect, if any, our teaching has.

Well, anyway, a few weeks later, when they returned from a visit in the schools, many of the students had recognized and constructively criticized examples of practice like that in the poem. They had not been asked to. I wasn't involved in their going to the schools and hadn't given them any assignment or anything....But I could see from the excellent criticisms and suggestions they volunteered that they had incorporated something of the poem, or its message into their own way of viewing teaching. They were full of stories of what they had seen and done, of the times they or others had stifled and restrained the children's thinking, and of what they had done to try and change

that. The poem wasn't just pretty words to cry over and then forget. It was something they were applying to their own lives. My satisfaction at that moment was immense and deep. I began to think that because of my course, maybe some of them would really be more sensitive to children's need to create. That was one of those times when I felt closest to truly being a teacher educator. (reconstructed from interview no. 3: Ilana)

Reflections:

Teacher Educator as Knower

In a private moment of discovery, a teacher educator, Ilana, is moved by a poem she finds both intellectually and emotionally powerful. Someone else has put into words that which, at some level, she already knew. The poem seems to deepen what she knows, helping her see it more clearly than before, and giving her new words in which to express it. The poem illuminates pedagogical practice in a way that theory often does not.

What Ilana has learned, or at least rediscovered, is not trivial. The significance of her knowledge lies in it's relevance to her life and to the lives of her students. This relevancy lends an importance and an urgency to what she knows, and the poem becomes a precious possession in which she takes great pleasure; it becomes her poem. Part of the joy of learning perhaps lies in the personal fulfillment we find in knowing. However "objective" or "scientific" our knowledge may be, it is our knowledge, that which we know.

The sort of joy Ilana feels reflects a commitment to personal learning and inquiry that my interviews suggest is made by many teacher educators. Another teacher educator whom I interviewed put it this way: "I believe in the power of learning to raise us above the mundane aspects of our daily lives."

Confirmation Through Learning, and Teaching

Ilana's story underlines the relationship between a teacher educator's own learning and his or her teaching. Almost immediately, Ilana wants to share the poem with her students. She sees in a flash that the poem can be a pedagogical means of reaching her students, of sharing a meaningful experience with them. Here, beautifully illustrated, is the momentum that the joy of knowing gives to our teaching.

In sharing her poem, Ilana is not simply pointing to some outside content in a one-way monologue. In sharing an experience of personal significance, she is opening herself to her students, and in so doing turns a potential monologue into an authentic dialogue, creating a "we-ness" or "between". In what van Manen (1977) refers to as a "co-orientational grasping" or the fusion of horizons, a view of the world is truly shared, however

momentarily. At such times, like Ilana and her students, we feel understood and confirmed. "See how it is", we are really saying, showing our students a new way to view their lives as teachers. And it appears that they do see, that they catch a glimpse of the image reflected by our saying. Yet in that saying, we are often also asking a question. The "see how it is" becomes, also, "is this how it is? What do you think of what I see? How does my interpretation or knowledge measure up in the light of your knowledge, of your experience?"

What Ilana learns, she immediately wishes to share, and in that sharing, she searches for yet further insight into that which she knows. Had her students responded differently, or, perhaps indifferently, Ilana might have begun to question her knowledge or the soundness of pedagogical theory or her own ability as a professor. The many interviews I conducted suggest that for the teacher educator, university teaching is yet another way to learn about teaching and about oneself; for in the giving, we hope not only to show something to our students, but also to test ourselves by authentically turning to our students as trusted partners in dialogue. Through encounter, we seek what Maurice Friedman (1983), after Martin Buber (1965), calls confirmation:

> To exist as human beings we must, as long as we live, enter ever anew into the flowing interchange of confirming and being confirmed, of addressing and responding.... We need to be confirmed in our uniqueness as what we are, who we can become, and what we are called to become, and this can only be known in the give and take of living dialogue. (pp.40-41)
>
> Mutual confirmation is most fully realized in what Buber calls "making present"... Making the other present means to "imagine the real", to imagine quite concretely what another person is wishing, feeling, perceiving, and thinking. (pp.8-9)

This testing or search for confirmation involves risk and may be painful. Who we are can be called into question. In other stories not recounted here, for example, I heard about moments when students greet their professor's teaching with disbelief or even with disdain, saying such things as "That's not how it is; that is impossible; it would take too much work; the schools would never allow it", or even worse, answering an earnest sharing of ideas with uncomprehending and indifferent silence.

Those to whom we turn for confirmation may withold their presence or be unable to make us present. In understanding the risk, we then doubly appreciate Ilana's joy and deep satisfaction in the enthusiastic and active response of her students. This time, for her, the risk was worth it.

There is much more in Ilana's story: an example of the power of evocative illustration in university teaching to link theory with practice, the striving of the teacher educator to influence practice in the schools, the desire to encourage critical reflection and action in our education students, and more. For the moment, however, let's move on to a story told to me by Rachel, another teacher educator.

Brown Bear, Brown Bear

During a course associated with the practicum, I talked to my students about how to expand children's language learning. I talked to my students about alternate ways of looking at children's literacy in terms of using big books and whole language experiences with children rather than fragmenting emergent literacy into teaching the alphabet and teaching letter sounds. Some of the students reject this almost immediately as soon as they go out into the classroom and see that letter sounds <u>are</u> being taught in the schools. They feel safer with the program guides, staying within the confines of whatever is done in the classrooms where they do their practice teaching.

Something very special happened on a call-back from the schools. One student, Tara, brought me back a study of a child with whom she had been working, a cerebral palsy child who had a terrible language difficulty. He had some speech problems; hardly anyone could understand him. Tara had made a really big book, her own version of <u>Brown bear, brown bear,</u> a Bill Martin book. She had made this book herself, trying to weave in fine motor control activities and trying to weave in some literacy or language extension opportunities as well. The book was very, very beautiful. The first page had this brown bear with a little brown bobbing tail and eyes that moved, so that you could work with it at so many different levels as you read the book. You could talk

about bears and brownness and the child could talk along as you read, but also there were so many things you could manipulate as you went along. On the next page, there was a beautiful, vibrant red bird with real feathers on its head and two tail feathers coming out of it which the child could take out and feel.... On another page was a purple cat. The purple cat had a rough coat you could touch and had pipe cleaners as whiskers which you could bend into a smiling cat or a sad cat with the whiskers drooping down. There was a yellow duck in the story who had a wing you could move to make it fly and so on.

When we listened to the teaching tapes she had recorded while using the material with the child... I think tears actually came to my eyes, I was so utterly delighted. The joy in this child's voice as he tried to join in as she worked with him, "brown bear, brown bear what do you see?" He was always trying to join in, and when he saw the purple cat, well, he just cried out, "Oooooooh". The ecstacy in his voice, the tone of his voice, you could just see his eyes light up. As Tara listened to the tape with me, her eyes just lit up too as she re-lived the experience. She was joyful (on the tape)... well, at first you could hear a tentativeness to her voice, but then you could hear what I feel is a true interaction. The child was expressing interest in the story, joining in with the words, however limited his speech was, he was joining in, and then his excitement, his joy at seeing the next picture and the escalation in her ability to connect to the child. He laughs, and then she laughs, and he picks up, and she picks up, and then he picks up. It was almost like a communicative deepening of the interaction. She so beautifully expanded the child's language experience. It was an enriching experience, clearly, for both the child and the teacher.

This child is a child who seldom seems involved in anything,...who has had a fair amount of emotional trauma in his life,...and who is very distractable. At school, they had therefore been trying to limit the stimulation in his environment; yet here was this book that was so highly stimulating and it clearly engaged him. I felt, "Wow! I could die right now, I could do nothing more!" It was a very special moment,... a perfect example of how somebody can use a theory to generate something that is so perfectly appropriate for a child. (reconstructed from interview no. 3: Rachel)

Reflections:

The Joy of Learning and Teaching Revisited

Responding perhaps to the call of the child's need, a student teacher creates a book with care and hope and pedagogical concern. In making and sharing the book, there is learning and teaching. "Oooooooh", says the child with joy and understanding in one of those moments for which a teacher lives. Inspired by the child's reaction, Tara learns about teaching, able to respond pedagogically because she now better understands. Her hesitancy gives way to confidence as she sees what to do, and is thus joyful, too. Perhaps also lingering in the back of her mind is the suddenly meaningful trace of Rachel's teaching. A reciprocal reaction is set in motion. Tara shares the tape with Rachel and relives the joy. The student teacher is, in a way, teaching the teacher educator who also responds with delight and deeper understanding, thus helping Tara learn further and so on. The tone and content of the interview from which this story emerged shows how the communicative interaction Rachel sees between Tara and the child is, in a sense, recreated between student teacher and teacher educator. In this story, learning and teaching emerge as intimately related, almost mirror reflections of each other, parts of an inseparable whole. As we saw in Ilana's story, the joy of learning quickly becomes the joy and challenge of shared learning: it becomes teaching. As teacher educators, we are called both to learn and teach about teaching and to teach and learn about learning. We may often find, as Ilana and Rachel

do, that we are doing both at once.

Confirmation of Knowledge: Theory and Practice

Like many teacher educators, Rachel and Ilana are concerned about the relationship between theory and practice. The theories they present to future teachers are ones which they feel will lead towards "good" practice in the schools and touch the lives of children in a positive way. Yet, Rachel is almost surprised to see what she calls so "perfect" an application of her theorizing. Teacher educators sometimes seem to doubt the worth of their theories, especially when the implications of those theories seem contrary to current practice in the field. We need to test what we think we know; we need to see our theories illustrated or applied more often perhaps than our daily experience usually permits. Hence Rachel's and Ilana's delight when their students relate their professor's theorizing to their own teaching, showing the theories to be meaningful and practical, in as sense, bringing them to life. Often isolated from direct contact with children, we search as teacher educators for the confirmation of our knowledge through the actions of others.

Commitment, Hope, and Generativity

In Ilana and Rachel, we sense a concern for the quality of our interaction with children. In sharing her poem, for example, Ilana was clearly trying to point the way towards the kind of teacher she hopes her students will become. It is as if she wishes to indirectly touch the lives of children by profoundly influencing in some way the practice of the future teachers who are her students. Her deepest satisfaction rests in the hope that she has inspired her students to be better teachers than they might otherwise have been.

Similarly, Rachel delights in Tara's teaching. In an ecstatic voice, Rachel proclaims, "Wow! I could die right now, I could do nothing more." It is in seeing our students joyfully learning on their own and in their becoming able to teach us, that we seem to draw closest to fullfilling our mission. The torch has been passed on; we are confirmed in our professional calling as teachers of teachers.

What is this desire to touch the lives of our students and children? What does it signify? Perhaps it reflects our need to contribute creatively to the future of the world. Erik Erikson (1963) refers to this interest in establishing and guiding the next generation as "generativity". The desire to generate is also an expression of our pedagogical hope for the future. We wish to change the world, to narrow the gap between

what is and what ought to be, to act on the hopes to which we are committed.

In a recent book entitled Outliving the Self, John Kotre (1985) explores Erikson's concept of generativity in relation to life histories or stories, speaking of generativity as "a desire to invest one's substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self"(p.10). Kotre describes two kinds of generativity that relate directly to teaching:

> Technical generativity is accomplished by teachers... who pass on skills to those less advanced than themselves....Here the object of legacy-making is the apprentice, with whom the instructor identifies as a way of reliving past experiences of mastery and extending those experiences into the future....But the object of generativity is not merely the apprentice, it is also the skill itself, whose life is vicariously the possessor's: this craft shall be kept alive and its potential developed. Often there is conflict between the welfare of the apprentice and that of the skill. One instructor declares that the skill has priority: if the pupil cannot fully master the art in question, cannot perform the right way, he will have to be dismissed. Another instructor favors the pupil: recognizing the limit of students, he compromises technique and teaches only what is in their capacity to learn. (p. 13)

> Cultural generativity is directly concerned with the mind. When a teacher turns from how to do it to what it means, when she speaks of the idea of music or healing or law, when she brings to the fore the symbol system that stood in the background and offers her student the outlines of an identity, she becomes culturally generative. She is no longer a teacher of skills but a mentor, and her apprentice has become a disciple.... By culture I mean no more than an integrated set of symbols interpreting existence and giving a sense of meaning and place to members of a enduring collectivity.... What the mentor must do is offer an engaging vision of who the disciple might become, a vision that is true both to the disciple's and the culture's potentials. (p.14)

Mentors, as Kotre suggests, must be true to the potential of both disciple and culture. By truly attending to who our students are (what Buber calls "making the other present"), we are able to

offer them a vision or a way that authentically takes them into account, a vision that is true both to who they might really become and to our own pedagogical hope. Ilana's recognition of the poem as "fitting" her students is a good example of being true to our "disciples" while at the same time remaining true to our theories and dreams, to our "culture".

Teacher education could thus be viewed as an example of cultural generativity. By individually and collectively finding deep meaning and importance in certain ways of viewing education, we emerge from the many encounters of our personal history, our scholarly endeavours, and our experience as faithful "keepers of meaning" (Kotre: 1984). Our pedagogical dreams and theories are a legacy which we nurture and care for, offering them with hope to future teachers as possibilities of existence. Perhaps that is wherein our conservatism lies. Like guardians of a sacred flame, we pass on in our inspired discourse the Torch of Dewey (or Whitehead, Comenius, Pestalozzi, or whomever) and hope the fire will catch. But, as we shall see in the next story, we may find that it doesn't. Hence the great delight and significance for us, when, like Ilana or Rachel, we experience a moment when it seems we did make a qualitative, practical difference in the life of a teacher or child.

Like Wallpaper Paste

I received a phone call last night from Amy, a practicum student. Amy does beautiful planning; she can churn out a series of lesson plans like links from a sausage machine. She has beautiful classroom organization; in fact, except for communication and self-evaluation on which I rate her quite low, she's got all those things we check for on the rating scales. But that essence in teaching, that quality of human interaction, she doesn't have that. It's very hard to numerically evaluate essence, we don't have a box for it on our forms! So I know she is going to pass the practicum, because technically, she's all right. I feel kind of despairing about that.

Communicating with Amy is a bit like diving into a bucket of wallpaper paste! It's so bland and gooey. I look for some way to explain the problem to her, but there's nothing drastically wrong with her classroom teaching, not much I can really put my finger on.... I certainly couldn't fail her: her practicum was well-organized, the cooperating teacher was happy, everyone was happy - except me.

Amy seems so involved with her own performance. Her focus is on administering work rather than on human interaction. I guess I'm finding out that my focus is more on the human interaction in teaching, but I don't know where to start with Amy. How do you say to her, "You have to be more human, you have to interact with kids"? You can't tell someone "You teach like a bucket of wallpaper paste." So I thought, "Maybe I can find something I could point out to her, something we could work on". Well, finally, I latched onto her voice as a place to start because her voice reflects that personal blandness I've mentioned. It is dull and never varies.... So I asked her to tape her voice and to try to get a little more dynamism into it, to really try to engage the children with her voice. At first she forgot to tape, which is a normal human reaction, but then she decided to make the tape and lo and behold, she couldn't hear anything wrong with her voice. It sounded great to her.... So what could I do? I eased off and thought, "There is no difference I can make".

After the phone call, I thought, "I give up". But what did I do this morning? I sent her a little book about communicating with young children! I don't know what else to do. I don't know how to make her more self-aware. It scares me to think that she is going to be a teacher. Oh, she'll run a very correct classroom, as long as she can have her workbook for reading and her workbook for math and her workbook for language, as long as it depends on on her organizational ability to be a parking warden in the classroom.... To those who believe that that is teaching, she will do a fine job.... I think she's a dismal failure. I feel that in passing her, I'm contributing to the propagation of the worst parts of our school system.

(reconstructed from interview no. 3 with Rachel)

Reflections

A Dual Commitment: Our Students and our Pedagogical Theorizing

Rachel desperately seeks a glimpse of Amy as a possible teacher; that is, as someone whom Rachel can in good conscience name "teacher". Being a teacher educator can mean commiting ourselves to helping every student become the best possible teacher that student can be. But what happens when, as in the case of Amy, the "best possible" doesn't seem to be good enough? As Rachel does, we may find ourselves caught in a dilemma, torn by the internal tensions that occur when our deepest commitments become suddenly opposing. On one hand, as teachers, we feel committed to our students: to accepting who they are and to helping them learn within the context and limitations of our lived reality. On the other hand, as scholars, critics, and researchers, we have a deep commitment to our professional culture, to our pedagogical values, hopes, and theories: to that which makes our university teaching possible in the first place. These two commitments usually overlap or coincide; indeed, as we have seen in the other stories, it is often through our commitment to our students that we fulfill our commitment to our hopes and theories. Consequently, we usually manage to maintain both commitments with little difficulty, allowing the shifting interplay between them to shape our actions as teacher educators. How difficult it is when the shifting tensions become so stongly

opposed that we are suddenly forced to choose between them. Alternately despairing and defiant, Rachel refuses to choose between her commitment to a certain vision of teacher education and her commitment to Amy, despite the writing on the wall which seems painfully clear.

Almost against her better judgement, Rachel simply refuses to give up on Amy. To do so would mean at least momentarily abandoning faith in the egalitarian dream that every student can be helped, that every student-teacher can learn, a belief that seems characteristic of much of the education professoriate. An ethos of "service" and a democratic commitment to education for everyone who seeks it is an historical legacy which many of us inherited as teachers before we became professors. Although this ethos is often too lightly dismissed as sentimentality or as an excuse for low standards, it doesn't really go away when teachers become teacher educators. As one teacher educator put it, "My first priority in working... at the university is service to the students in my classes." We don't give up easily on our students; we often go to what other university professors might consider extraordinary lengths to help our education students, perhaps because of the enormous responsibility we ultimately feel to children and to the education system. The conflict often felt in our use of time beween our desire and commitment to do research and our deep commitment to helping our students learn is a further manifestation of the bind which the dual nature of our commitment can create for us as professors of education.

A Warning: Teacher Educator as Evangelist

In Rachel's story, we also briefly glimpse the possibility of teacher educator as evangelist: "Mine is the way! Be who I want you to be! Do what I say you must do". In conversation, Rachel at times referred to what she calls "the messianic aspect" of our lives as teacher educators. The other participants, too, spoke uneasily of the possibility that underlying our encouragement of our students to think critically lies a belief that truly enlightened people will see things our way. At the same time, however, there radiated throughout the interviews an eager willingness to continually question personal knowledge and beliefs and a dread of unwelcome, over-zealous disciples. Like Rachel, the other participants I have interviewed seem self-aware and very self-critical of a tendency to preach. Consciously, we seek not to coerce, but to inspire and to show through authentic dialogue and action. We seek to nurture, to encourage, to share, to invite, to stimulate, and to fascillitate. When faced with failure, however, we can find ourselves selling, persuading, attempting to convert, manipulating, or even exhorting, in essence banging our head against a stone wall as we fall farther and farther away from pedagogy, hearing only ourselves and not our students.

Making A Difference : Teacher Educator as

Radical or Conservative?

Ask almost any teacher educator why it is important to be a teacher educator, what the ultimate goal is, and without any hesitation the same response will be given in almost the same words, somewhat like a Hippocratic oath that has been learned by heart. And yet the answer is not "pat". It is usually spoken with authenticity and commitment.

Rachel: I thought for a long time that by going into teacher education I might be able to make some difference, however minor, to a group of teachers who are going out into the school system.

Ted: I think my major concern is to try to give children better classroom experiences, to get rid of some of the...paper blizzard out there, and...to give kids more meaningful activities.... When I stand in front of a class of student teachers I sort of see twenty-five or thirty kids behind each one. Then I think that instead of teaching thirty students, I'm really teaching nine hundred kids and that makes a lot of difference. It is a serious kind of job.

Ilana: I really still go on hoping that in some way what I do with my students here at the university might someday help them improve the quality of education in our schools... we still need stars to reach for.

Michael: If we were less concerned about graduating students who would know how to fit into the system and more concerned about graduating people who could really think critically about a situation, who were creative and imaginative, we might find... that we begin to have an effect on what goes on out there in the schools.

Like many of us, the participants want to "make a difference" (Rachel) and this difference seems to be one of influencing change towards "good practice" (Ted) or "mind activity" (Michael). What is the nature of their expressed

desire for change? Is there an element of the revolutionary, of the subversive in this desire?

Rachel: I've seen tremendous need for change in elementary education. And you do one of two things; either you work by example... or you work by revolution. There seem to be two ways: political or educational. This society is in no way ready for revolution and neither am I. I think I would prefer to infiltrate, to change from within. Being a teacher educator is my way, at the moment. (iR-I-9)

Calls for change and their implicit criticisms of the schools are probably as old as teacher education itself (see, for example, Carr: 1962). And, yet, teaching is often considered to be a conserving activity (Postman: 1982). It is seen as the way society perpetuates itself, the way one generation preserves its beliefs and culture and passes it on to the next (Apple: 1979; Giroux: 1981). "Rhetoric about what <u>should be</u> undoubtedly shifts more rapidly and strongly than either the beliefs or practices of teachers". (Goodlad:p.174)

Are teacher educators really radicals, as our earnest rhetoric sometimes suggests, or are we "closet" conservatives, working as Bartholomew (1976) asserts, to maintain the status quo? Do our actions contradict our words, conveying a hidden curriculum of traditional practice? Has our critical barking been rightly perceived as impotent blustering that can be tolerated by the system we criticize because our own lack of action implies we can be easily ignored? Is our desire for change genuine or is it merely an impressive camouflage behind which we hide from ourselves our own ineptness, inactivity, or lack of generativity?

Perhaps with justification (Lortie: 1975), we often blame the lack of fundamental change in the schools on the socialization process in the schools, or on our students, or even on our own teaching (Zeichner & Tabachnick: 1981). As teacher education has moved into the university setting, teacher educators have become university professors. We are becoming socialized into the role of professor. Maybe this socialization, too, can in some ways be an obstacle to being an agent or a model of pedagogical change for the schools.

Criticizing what is enables us to imagine what ought to be. In our frequent calls for change we are are often radical dreamers, filled with the hope and images of wonderful possibilities. Is it too easy to feel we have done our job merely by keeping a dream alive? Or is that in a sense our mission? Is it the power of our dreams rather than the example of our action that we wish to pass on to future generations of teachers? Perhaps it is impossible to do one without the other, perhaps it is through action that we could truly communicate the power of our dreams (our theorizing). We find meaning in our lives through the active pursuit of our dreams, in making the imagined real. The essence of our generativity does not lie in a false dichotomy between theory and practice, but rather in how we live. If our commitment is to remain strong, there must be enough in our doing to maintain the hope on which our commitment is based. In seeking what we can do, we must therefore continue to ask what we ought to do.

Perhaps teacher educators are radical and conservative. We are radical in the changes we seek, in our wish to make a difference. But we are also conservative: hoping to pass on the best of what was and what is; hoping to preserve that which we see has within it the potential for a future good. It is thus in our hope that we are both radical and conservative:

> Might we not say that hope always implies the superlogical connection between a return and something completely new? Following from this it is to be wondered whether preservation or restoration, on the one hand, and revolution or renewal on the other, are not the two movements, the two abstractly dissociated aspects of one and the same unity, which dwells in hope and is beyond the reach of all our faculties of reasoning or of conceptual formulation. This aspiration can be approximately expressed in the simple but contradictory words: as before, but differently and better than before . Here we...come once again upon the theme of liberation, for it is never a simple return to the status quo, a simple return to our being; it is that and much more, and even the contrary of that: an undreamed-of-promotion, a transfiguration. (Marcel: 1978, p.67)

Marcel's comments speak eloquently to Kotre's work on generativity, deepening our understanding of our generative striving, opening the possibility of generativity as transformation or liberation.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the stories told here are those of only two teacher educators, they reflect some of the issues and themes that my interviews with others suggest might be basic to teacher education. Through careful analysis, teacher education emerges as a generative mode of being, as a primary way in which teacher educators search for meaning and confirmation in their own lives.

The teacher educator's way of being involves a deep commitment to teaching and to learning, a commitment which seems to rest in the belief in the power of learning to raise us above the mundane aspects of our daily lives and to open more and better possibilities for human existence. More specifically, the practice of the teacher educator rests in the hope of touching the lives of children by touching the practice of future teachers, thereby making schools better places for children to be. The teacher educator emerges in this study as both radical and conservative. By conserving what is good or potentially good, by criticizing and changing what is not, and by imagining what could be and ought to be, teacher educators hope to offer inspiring guides for practice, thereby making "a difference". The interviews I conducted suggest that what "ought to be" is intimately related to one's own personal experience as teacher and learner. Research seems to be having an impact on teacher educators only to the extent that it speaks meaningfully to their own experience. In the lives of teacher educators, teaching reveals itself as authentic sharing, as dialogical encounter, as inspiring through the use of powerful illustrations, as seeking confirmation as knower by testing ideas, as learning, as modeling, but sometimes, also as exhortation or coercion, and as a turning away from pedagogy. An examination of a teacher educator's experience reveals the fluctuating tensions of a dual commitment: a commitment to the learning of one's students, and a commitment to furthering professional understanding; that is, to the teacher educator's own learning and professional culture.

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